Painter Dies Attempting Rescue

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The incident happened in a matter of seconds. A scaffold collapse left three workers dangling from their safety ropes beneath the Jefferson Barracks Bridge over the Mississippi River. Jimmy Belfield immediately went to rescue his co-workers. But either he wasn’t wearing a safety line himself, or it disconnected or snapped, and he plunged into the water. Co-workers said he was not wearing a life vest.

“I could see a towboat coming,” said “T. ” Martin “The pilot waved like he saw him. Jimmy was moving his arms like he was doing the backstroke. Then he wasn’t there anymore. “

The other three workers were hauled to safety about an hour later. Co-workers called Belfield a hero.

“He was the kind of guy who’s always looking out for everybody else, making sure they were safe,” said one.

Are you prepared for the hazards you’ll meet on the job today? Take a minute or two to think about what you’re doing. Can you see a hazard? Tell someone! Don’t assume that other workers have spotted it. Do you wear the right personal protective equipment? Always? Leaving off your personal protection for even a second can be enough to land you in deep trouble. What PPE should you be wearing?

Source: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 17, 2006